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THOUGHTS from the WRITINGS of RICHARD JEFFERIES

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Selected by H. S. H. WAYLEN

LONDON: LONGMANS, GREEN AND CO., AND NEW YORK. 1895

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PREFACE

FOR permission to indulge in one of the greatest pleasures I have known, I offer my best thanks

ERRATA

Page 41, line 1, for 'papyre' read 'papyri.'
,, 48, ,, 4, for 'ever' read 'era.'
,, 57, ,, 4, for 'grace' read 'Greece.'
,, 66, ,, 5, for 'And' read 'An.'
,, 78, ,, 10, for 'wan' read 'roan.'
,, 99, last word, for 'truth' read 'tenth.'
,, 102, line 10, for 'some or' read 'some spot or.'
,, 102, ,, 3 from foot, for 'decision' read 'derision.'
,, 107, ,, 7 from foot, for 'To' read 'Is.'

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PREFACE

FOR permission to indulge in one of the greatest pleasures I have known, I offer my best thanks to Mrs. Jefferies, Messrs. Longmans, Green & Co., Messrs. Chatto & Windus, Messrs. Richard Bentley & Son, and Messrs. Sampson Low, Marston & Co.; also the Editors of the following publications in which Jefferies' Essays first appeared: The Fortnightly Review, Manchester Guardian, Pall Mall Gazette, Standard, English Illustrated Magazine, Longman's Magazine, St. James's Gazette, Art Journal, Chambers' Journal, Magazine of Art, Century

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Illustrated Magazine, Good Words, and The Graphic.

I have found great difficulty in making extracts from 'The Story of my Heart'; in its extreme beauty and depth of thought it should be taken as a whole, nevertheless I have chosen a few, for I think it is Jefferies' masterpiece.

It may be noticed that I have made no selections from many of Jefferies' best known books. It is from no lack of appreciation, for I think they should find a place in every library, but being more especially natural and social histories than nature thoughts they seem less suited to a small volume of this kind.

My first idea in making a selection of 'Jefferies' Thoughts' was to put them together in a small notebook for my own use, but it occurred to me that what gave me pleasure might give pleasure to others, and I therefore obtained leave

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to edit them. They are mere fragments —gems taken from a mine—but if the perusal of them induces others to study the original works in their entirety, which I sincerely hope, I shall feel that my effort has not been in vain.

H. S. H. W.

Upper Parkstone,
23rd January 1895.

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THOUGHTS FROM WRITINGS OF RICHARD JEFFERIES

THE whole time in the open air, resting at mid-day, under the elms with the ripple of heat flowing through the shadow; at midnight between the ripe corn and the hawthorn hedge on the white wild camomile and the poppy pale in the duskiness, with face upturned to the thoughtful heaven.

Consider the glory of it, the life above this life to be obtained from constant presence with the sunlight and the stars.

—'The Open Air':[1] Golden-Brown.

[1] 'The Open Air': Chatto and Windus.

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THOUGHTS FROM WRITINGS

SO it has ever been to me, by day or by night, summer or winter, beneath the trees the heart feels nearer to that depth of life the far sky means. The rest of spirit found only in beauty, ideal and pure, comes there because the distance seems within touch of thought. To the heaven thought can reach lifted by the strong arms of the oak, carried up by the ascent of the flame-shaped fir.—'The Open Air': Wild Flowers.

IF we had never before looked upon the earth, but suddenly came to it man or woman grown, set down in the midst of a summer mead, would it not seem to us a radiant vision? The hues, the shapes, the song and life of birds, above all the sunlight, the breath of heaven, resting on it; the mind would be filled with its glory, unable to grasp it, hardly believing that such things

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could be mere matter and no more. Like a dream of some spirit-land it would appear, scarce fit to be touched lest it should fall to pieces, too beautiful to be long watched lest it should fade away.

So it seemed to me as a boy, sweet and new like this each morning; and even now, after the years that have passed, and the lines they have worn in the forehead, the summer mead shines as bright and fresh as when my foot first touched the grass. It has another meaning now: the sunshine and the flowers speak differently, for a heart that has once known sorrow reads behind the page, and sees sadness in joy. But the freshness is still there, the dew washed the colours before dawn. Unconscious happiness in finding wild-flowers—unconscious and unquestioning and therefore unbounded.—'The Open Air': Wild-Flowers.

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THOUGHTS FROM WRITINGS

IN the mind all things are written in pictures—there is no alphabetical combination of letters and words; all things are pictures and symbols. The bird's-foot lotus is the picture to me of sunshine and summer, and of that summer in the heart which is known only in youth, and then not alone. No words could write that feeling: the bird's-foot lotus writes it.—'The Open Air': Wild-Flowers.

MEMORY, like the sun, paints to me bright pictures of the golden summer-time of lotus; I can see them, but how shall I fix them for you? By no process can that be accomplished. It is like a story that cannot be told because he who knows it is tongue-tied and dumb.—'The Open Air': Wild-Flowers.

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I WILL concentrate my mind on my own little path of life, and steadily gaze downwards. In vain. Who can do so? who can care alone for his or her petty trifles of existence that has once entered amongst the wild-flowers? How shall I shut out the sun? Shall I deny the constellations of the night? They are there; the mystery is for ever about us—the question, the hope, the aspiration cannot be put out. So that it is almost a pain not to be able to cease observing and tracing the untraceable maze of beauty.—'The Open Air': Wild-Flowers.

THE little brown wren finds her way through the great thicket of hawthorn. How does she know her path, hidden by a thousand thousand leaves? Tangled and crushed together by their own growth, a crown

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of thorns hangs over the thrush's nest; thorns for the mother, hope for the young. Is there a crown of thorns over your heart? A spike has gone deep enough into mine.—'The Open Air': Wild-Flowers.

TWO things can go through the solid oak: the lightning of the clouds that rends the iron timber, the lightning of the spring—the electricity of the sunbeams forcing him to stretch forth and lengthen his arms with joy.—'The Open Air': Wild-Flowers.

WHITE tent-walls of cloud—a warm white, being full to overflowing of sunshine—stretched across from ash-top to ash-top, a cloud-canvas roof, a tent-palace of the delicious air. For of all things there is none so sweet as sweet air—one

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great flower it is, drawn round about, over, and enclosing, like Aphrodite's arms: as if the dome of the sky were a bell flower drooping down over us, and the magical essence of it filling all the room of the earth. Sweetest of all things is wild-flower air. Full of their ideal the starry flowers strained upwards on the bank, striving to keep above the rude grasses that pushed by them: genius has ever had such a struggle. The plain road was made beautiful by the many thoughts it gave. I came every morning to stay by the starlit bank.—'The Open Air': Wild-Flowers.

A LITTLE feather droops downwards to the ground—a swallow's feather fuller of miracle than the Pentateuch—how shall that feather be placed again in the breast where it grew? Nothing twice. Time changes the places that knew us, and

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if we go back in after years, still even then it is not the old spot; the gate swings differently, new thatch has been put on the old gables, the road has been widened, and the sward the driven sheep lingered on is gone. Who dares to think then? For faces fade as flowers, and there is no consolation.—'The Open Air': Wild-Flowers.

GIVE me the old road, the same flowers—they were only stitchwort—the old succession of days and garland, ever weaving into it fresh wild-flowers from far and near. Fetch them from distant mountains, discover them on decaying walls, in unsuspected corners; though never seen before, still they are the same: there has been a place in the heart waiting for them.—'The Open Air': Wild-Flowers.

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THE old brown sails and the nets, the anchors and tarry ropes, go straight to nature. You do not care for nature now? Well! all I can say is, you will have to go to nature one day—when you die: you will find nature very real then. I rede you to recognise the sunlight and the sea, the flowers and woods now.—'The Open Air': Sunny Brighton.

A WILLOW-WREN still remembered his love, and whispered about it to the silent fir tops, as in after days we turn over the pages of letters, withered as leaves, and sigh. So gentle, so low, so tender a song the willow-wren sang that it could scarce be known as the voice of a bird, but was like that of some yet more delicate creature with the heart of a woman. —'The Open Air': The Pine Wood.

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THOUGHTS FROM WRITINGS

THE swallows bring us the sunbeams on their wings from Africa to fill the fields with flowers. From the time of the arrival of the first swallow the flowers take heart; the few and scanty plants that had braved the earlier cold are succeeded by a constantly enlarging list, till the banks and lanes are full of them.—'The Open Air': Nature on the Roof.

IT is a curious sight to see the early harvest morn — all hushed under the burning sun, a morn that you know is full of life and meaning, yet quiet as if a man's foot had never trodden the land. Only the sun is there, rolling on his endless way.—'The Open Air': One of the New Voters.

I AM simply describing the realities of rural life behind the scenes. The golden harvest is the first scene; the golden wheat, glorious under

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the summer sun. Bright poppies flower in its depths, and convolvulus climbs the stalks. Butterflies float slowly over the yellow surface as they might over a lake of colour.

To linger by it, to visit it day by day, at even to watch the sunset by it, and see it pale under the changing light, is a delight to the thoughtful mind. There is so much in the wheat, there are books of meditation in it, it is dear to the heart. Behind these beautiful aspects comes the reality of human labour — hours upon hours of heat and strain; there comes the reality of a rude life, and in the end little enough of gain. The wheat is beautiful, but human life is labour.—'The Open Air': One of the New Voters.

IF only we could persuade ourselves to remain quiescent when we are happy! If only we would remain still in the arm-chair as the last curl of

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vapour rises from a cigar that has been enjoyed! If only we would sit still in the shadow and not go indoors to write that letter! Let happiness alone. Stir not an inch; speak not a word: happiness is a coy maiden—hold her hand and be still.—'The Open Air': The Modern Thames.

STEPPING up the hill laboriously, suddenly a lark starts into the light and pours forth a rain of unwearied notes overhead. With bright light, and sunshine, and sunrise, and blue skies, the bird is so associated in the mind, that even to see him in the frosty days of winter, at least assures us that summer will certainly return. Ought not winter, in allegorical designs, the rather to be represented with such things that might suggest hope than such as convey a cold and grim despair? The withered leaf, the snowflake, the hedging

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bill that cuts and destroys, why these? Why not rather the dear larks for one? They fly in flocks, and amid the white expanse of snow (in the south) their pleasant twitter or call is heard as they sweep along seeking some grassy spot cleared by the wind. The lark, the bird of the light, is there in the bitter short days. Put the lark then for winter, a sign of hope, a certainty of summer.

Put, too, the sheathed bud, for if you search the hedge you will find the buds there, on tree and bush, carefully wrapped around with the case which protects them as a cloak. Put, too, the sharp needles of the green corn: let the wind clear it of snow a little way, and show that under cold clod and colder snow the green thing pushes up, knowing that summer must come. Nothing despairs but man. Set the sharp curve of the white new moon in the sky: she is white in true frost, and yellow a little if

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it is devising a change. Set the new moon as something that symbols an increase. Set the shepherd's crook in a corner as a token that the flocks are already enlarged in number. The shepherd is the symbolic man of the hardest winter-time. His work is never more important than then. Those that only roam the fields when they are pleasant in May, see the lambs at play in the meadow, and naturally think of lambs and May flowers. But the lamb was born in the adversity of snow. Or you might set the morning star, for it burns and burns and glitters in the winter dawn, and throws forth beams like those of metal consumed in oxygen. There is nought that I know by comparison with which I might indicate the glory of the morning star, while yet the dark night hides in the hollows. The lamb is born in the fold. The morning star glitters in the sky. The bud is alive in its

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sheath; the green corn under the snow; the lark twitters as he passes. Now these to me are the allegory of winter.—'The Open Air': Out of Doors in February.

NATURE yields nothing to the sybarite. The meadow glows with buttercups in spring, the hedges are green, the woods lovely; but these are not to be enjoyed in their full significance unless you have traversed the same places when bare, and have watched the slow fulfilment of the flowers.—'The Open Air': Out of Doors in February.

PERHAPS if the country be taken at large there is never a time when there is not a flower of some kind out, in this or that warm southern nook. The sun never sets, nor do the flowers ever die. There is

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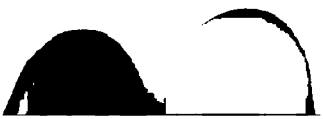
life always, even in the dry fir-cone that looks so brown and sapless. — 'The Open Air': Out of Doors in February.

BESIDE the moist clods the slender flags arise filled with the sweetness of the earth. Out of the darkness under — that darkness which knows no day save when the ploughshare opens its chinks — they have come to the light. To the light they have brought a colour which will attract the sunbeams from now till harvest. They fall more pleasantly on the corn, toned, as if they mingled with it. Seldom do we realise that the world is practically no thicker to us than the print of our footsteps on the path. Upon that surface we walk and act our comedy of life, and what is beneath is nothing to us. But it is out from that underworld, from the dead and the unknown, from the cold moist ground, that these



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green blades have sprung. Yonder a steam-plough pants up the hill, groaning with its own strength, yet all that strength and might of wheels, and piston, and chains, cannot drag from the earth one single blade like these. Force cannot make it; it must grow—an easy word to speak or write, in fact full of potency.

It is this mystery of growth and life, of beauty, and sweetness, and colour, starting forth from the clods, that gives the corn its power over me. Somehow I identify myself with it; I live again as I see it. Year by year it is the same, and when I see it I feel that I have once more entered on a new life. And I think the spring, with its green corn, its violets, and hawthorn leaves, and increasing song, grows yearly dearer and more dear to this our ancient earth. So many centuries have flown! Now it is the manner with all natural things to

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gather as it were by smallest particles. The merest grain of sand drifts unseen into a crevice, and by and by another; after a while there is a heap; a century, and it is a mound, and then every one observes and comments on it. Time itself has gone on like this; the years have accumulated, first in drifts, then in heaps, and now a vast mound, to which the mountains are knolls, rises up and overshadows us. Time lies heavy on the world. The old, old earth is glad to turn from the cark and care of drifted centuries to the first sweet blades of green.—'The Open Air': Out of Doors in February.

THE moment the eye of the mind is filled with the beauty of things natural, an equal freedom and width of view come to it. Step aside from the trodden footpath of personal experience, throwing away the petty cynicism born of petty hopes dis-

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appointed. Step out upon the broad down beside the green corn, and let its freshness become part of life.

The wind passes, and it bends—let the wind, too, pass over the spirit. From the cloud-shadow it emerges to the sunshine—let the heart come out from the shadow of roofs to the open glow of the sky. High above, the songs of the larks fall as rain—receive it with open hands. Pure is the colour of the green flags, the slender-pointed blades—let the thought be pure as the light that shines through that colour. Broad are the downs and open the aspect—gather the breadth and largeness of view. Never can that view be wide enough and large enough; there will always be room to aim higher. As the air of the hills enriches the blood, so let the presence of these beautiful things enrich the inner sense. One memory of the green corn, fresh beneath the sun and wind, will lift up the heart

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from the clods.—'The Open Air': Out of Doors in February.

THE lover of nature has the highest art in his soul. So I think the bluff English farmer who takes such pride and delight in his dogs and horses is a much greater man of art than any Frenchman preparing, with cynical dexterity of hand, some coloured presentment of flashy beauty for the Salon. The English girl who loves her horse—and English girls do love their horses most intensely—is infinitely more artistic in that fact than the cleverest painter on enamel. They who love nature are the real artists; the 'artists' are copyists.—'The Open Air': Outside London.

AS a few strokes from a loving hand will soothe a weary forehead, so the gentle pressure of the wild grass soothes and strokes away

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the nervous tension born of civilised life. —'The Open Air': Outside London.

THE forest is gone; but the spirit of nature stays, and can be found by those who search for it. Dearly as I love the open air, I cannot regret the mediæval days. I do not wish them back again; I would sooner fight in the foremost ranks of Time. Nor do we need them, for the spirit of nature stays, and will always be here, no matter to how high a pinnacle of thought the human mind may attain; still the sweet air, and the hills, and the sea, and the sun, will always be with us.—'The Open Air': Outside London.

MASTS are always dreamy to look at: they speak a romance of the sea; of unknown lands; of distant forests aglow with tropical colours and abounding with

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strange forms of life. In the hearts of most of us there is always a desire for something beyond experience. Hardly any of us but have thought, Some day I will go on a long voyage; but the years go by, and still we have not sailed. —'The Open Air': Red Roofs of London.

THE streamlet in the woods is full before the dove alights to drink at it; the flower in the grass has expanded before the butterfly comes. A great passion does not leap into existence as violets sprang up beneath the white feet of Aphrodite. It has grown first. The grapes have ripened in the sun before they are plucked for wine.—'The Dewy Morn.'[1]

OF old, old time the classic women in the 'Violet Land' of Greece went out to the sunrise, and, singing to Apollo, the sun, prayed that

[1] 'The Dewy Morn': Richard Bentley and Son.

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their hearts might be satisfied, and their homes secured; by the fountain they asked of the water that the highest aspirations of their souls might be fulfilled; of the earth they asked an abundance for those whom they loved. No more the hymn is heard to the sun; no more the stream murmurs in an undertone to the chorus of human hopes; no more the earth sees its wheat and its flowers taken from it to be presented to it again upon the altar in token of gratitude and prayer. But still the larks, as then, and still the thrushes, the fleeting swallows, and the doves, address themselves to sun, and earth, and stream, and heaven. Their songs vary not, their creed does not change, their prayer goes forth to the same old gods.

Have our hopes and hearts changed in the centuries? No; not one whit.—'The Dewy Morn.'

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THOUGHTS FROM WRITINGS

I THINK that those who have an imaginative corner in their hearts are better than those who have not. They have a shrine—to a shrine we bring our aspirations; there they accumulate and secretly influence our lives.—'The Dewy Morn.'

ABOVE the clear sky was full of stars, and among them the beautiful planet Jupiter shone serene. The sky was of a lovely night blue; it was an hour to think, to dream, to revere, to love—a time when, if ever it will, the soul reigns, and the coarse rude acts of day are forgotten in the aspirations of the inmost mind.

The night was calm—still; it was in no haste to do anything—it had nothing it needed to do. To be is enough for the stars.—'The Dewy Morn.'

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OVERHEAD and eastwards there shone a glory of blue heaven, illuminated from within with golden light. The deep rich azure was lit up with an inner gold; it was a time to worship, to lift up the heart. Is there anything so wondrously beautiful as the sky just before the sun rises in summer?—'The Dewy Morn.'

HUMAN dramatists arrange for all their characters to find happiness in the end. If there be any difficulty some one transfers his or her love with the greatest facility to another person; and thus being all paired off, they dance down the stage to the tune of 'Sir Roger de Coverley.'

The drama of real life never ends like this. Some one has to suffer—always some one has to suffer.

The old Greeks dwelt on the tendency

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of human affairs to drift downwards irresistibly to unhappiness. Guilt—that is, untoward and often involuntary actions—pulls generation after generation heavily as lead down, down, down. Sophocles, Æschylus—take which you will, still the same thought pervades their sculptured groups (for they are sculptured in words, nude, noble, unhappy). Grief falls upon human beings as the rain, not selecting good or evil, visiting the innocent, condemning those who have done no wrong.—'The Dewy Morn.'

THE stolid are alone happy. Yet there drops from the azure heaven a beam of light, and whomsoever that ray touches must follow it to the end, though cheeks grow pale, though shoulders stoop, though ache and pain increase. The path of the gods pursues beauty, but the stolid are alone happy.—'The Dewy Morn.'

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A MAXIM well established is that the man and the woman always come out in their deeds. Whatever they may profess, in time the act betrays them, and upon that outward act and deed the world invariably bases its opinion of their character. Is this just? Do you always do as you would like to do were it in your power? I find that circumstances force me often to act in a manner quite opposite to what I should prefer; I am, of course, judged by my acts, but do they really afford a true key to my character? I think not. —'The Dewy Morn.'

IF our old habits are suspended, how rapidly the touch of living hands disappears from our inanimate surroundings! Almost the instant the living hand is withdrawn, dust settles on the furniture and the room. . . . It is

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sorrowful to reflect how soon—but a day or two—and already the dust has gathered over the place we filled.—'The Dewy Morn.'

MEADOW and brook, wheatfields and hills—a simple landscape, yet such as is not to be surpassed by any on earth. A common landscape—there are hundreds such in our England—yet beyond compare. There are none like it elsewhere in the wide world.—'The Dewy Morn.'

HOW powerful, and yet uncontrollable by ourselves, is the influence of our life upon the lives of others! . . . For aught you can tell, your existence may be a fate to another—another's to you.—'The Dewy Morn.'

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THE heart, and the hand, and the mind of a man are for ever driving onwards, and no profundity of rest ever comes to his inmost consciousness. At dawn he looks forward to the noonday. So that true and restful happiness is for woman only, though it is given to her by man.—'The Dewy Morn.'

SO many, and so many, who have loved in the long passage of time, but are gone as the shadow goes from the dial when the sun sinks. Are, then, our noblest feelings to fade and become void?

Upon the sun-dial there were curious graven circles and interwoven angles, remnants of the ancient lore which saw fate in the stars and read things above nature in nature. Symbols and signs are still needed, for the earth and life

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are still mysterious; they cannot be written; they require the inarticulate sign of the magician. Let us not outlive love in our days, and come to look back with sorrow on those times.

You have seen the ships upon the sea; they sail hither and thither thousands of miles. Do they find aught equal to love? Can they bring back precious gems to rival it from the rich south?

The reapers have been in the corn these thousand years, the miners in the earth, the toilers in the city; in all the labour and long-suffering is there anything like unto love? Any reward or profit in the ships, the mines, the warehouses?

What are the institutions of man, the tawdry state, the false law, the subsidised superstition, and poor morality, that pale shadow of truth—what are these by love?

Could but love stay, could but love

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have its will, no more would be needed for eternity.—'The Dewy Morn.'

I WAS not more than eighteen when an inner and esoteric meaning began to come to me from all the visible universe, and indefinable aspirations filled me. I found them in the grass fields, under the trees, on the hill-tops, at sunrise, and in the night. There was a deeper meaning everywhere. The sun burned with it, the broad front of morning beamed with it; a deep feeling entered me while gazing at the sky in the azure noon, and in the star-lit evening.—'The Story of my Heart.'[1]

LOOK at another person while living; the soul is not visible, only the body which it animates. Therefore, merely because after death

[1] 'The Story of my Heart': Longmans, Green and Co.

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the soul is not visible is no demonstration that it does not still live. The condition of being unseen is the same condition which occurs while the body is living, so that intrinsically there is nothing exceptional, or supernatural, in the life of the soul after death.—'The Story of my Heart.'

MY soul has never been, and never can be, dipped in time. Time has never existed, and never will; it is a purely artificial arrangement. It is eternity now, it always was eternity, and always will be. By no possible means could I get into time if I tried. I am in eternity now, and must there remain. Haste not, be at rest, this Now is eternity. Because the idea of time has left my mind—if ever it had any hold on it—to me the man interred in the tumulus is living now as I live. We are both in eternity. There is no

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separation—no past; eternity, the Now, is continuous. When all the stars have revolved they only produce Now again. The continuity of Now is for ever.—'The Story of my Heart.'

AS I move about in the sunshine I feel in the midst of the supernatural: in the midst of immortal things. It is impossible to wrest the mind down to the same laws that rule pieces of timber, water, or earth. They do not control the soul, however rigidly they may bind matter.—'The Story of my Heart.'

THE air, the sunlight, the night, all that surrounds me seems crowded with inexpressible powers, with the influence of souls, or existences, so that I walk in the midst of immortal things.—'The Story of my Heart.'

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THOUGHTS FROM WRITINGS

SOMETIMES I have concentrated myself, and driven away by continued will all sense of outward appearances, looking straight with the full power of my mind inwards on myself. I find 'I' am there; an 'I' I do not wholly understand or know, something is there distinct from earth and timber, from flesh and bones. Recognising it, I feel on the margin of a life unknown, very near, almost touching it: on the verge of powers which if I could grasp would give me an immense breadth of existence, and ability to execute what I now only conceive; most probably of far more than that. To see that 'I' is to know that I am surrounded with immortal things. If, when I die, that 'I' also dies, and becomes extinct, still even then I have had the exaltation of these ideas.—'The Story of my Heart.'

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THERE is so much beyond all that has ever yet been imagined. As I write these words, in the very moment, I feel that the whole air, the sunshine out yonder lighting up the ploughed earth, the distant sky, the circumambient ether, and that far space, is full of soul-secrets, soul-life, things outside the experience of all the ages. — 'The Story of my Heart.'

TWELVE thousand years since the Caveman stood at the mouth of his cavern and gazed out at the night and the stars. He looked again and saw the sun rise beyond the sea. He reposed in the noontide heat under the shade of the trees, he closed his eyes and looked into himself. He was face to face with the earth, the sun, the night; face to face with himself. There was nothing be-

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tween; no wall of written tradition; no built-up system of culture—his naked mind was confronted by naked earth. He made three idea-discoveries, wresting them from the unknown: the existence of his soul, immortality, the deity. Now to-day, as I write, I stand in exactly the same position as the Caveman. Written tradition, systems of culture, modes of thought, have for me no existence. If ever they took any hold of my mind it must have been very slight; they have long ago been erased. From earth and sea and sun, from night, the stars, from day, the trees, the hills, from my own soul—from these I think. I stand this moment at the mouth of the ancient cave, face to face with nature, face to face with the supernatural, with myself. My naked mind confronts the unknown.
—'The Story of my Heart.'

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IS there any theory, philosophy, or creed, is there any system or culture, any formulated method able to meet and satisfy each separate item of this agitated pool of human life? By which they may be guided, by which hope, by which look forward? Not a mere illusion of the craving heart—something real, as real as the solid walls of fact against which, like drifted seaweed, they are dashed; something to give each separate personality sunshine and a flower in its own existence now; something to shape this million-handed labour to an end and outcome that will leave more sunshine and more flowers to those who must succeed? Something real now, and not in the spirit-land; in this hour now, as I stand and the sun burns. Can any creed, philosophy, system, or culture endure the test and remain unmolten in this fierce focus of human life? . . . Full well

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aware that all has failed, yet, side by side with the sadness of that knowledge, there lives on in me an unquenchable belief, thought burning like the sun, that there is yet something to be found, something real, something to give each separate personality sunshine and flowers in its own existence now. Something to shape this million-handed labour to an end and outcome, leaving accumulated sunshine and flowers to those who shall succeed. It must be dragged forth by might of thought from the immense forces of the universe.—'The Story of my Heart.'

OF all the inventions of casuistry with which man for ages has in various ways manacled himself and stayed his own advance, there is none equally potent with the supposition that nothing more is possible. Once well impress on the mind that it has

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already all, that advance is impossible because there is nothing further, and it is chained like a horse to an iron pin in the ground. It is the most deadly—the most fatal poison of the mind. No such casuistry has ever for a moment held me, but still, if permitted, the constant routine of house-life, the same work, the same thought in the work, the little circumstances regularly recurring, will dull the keenest edge of thought. By daily pilgrimage, I escaped from it back to the sun.—'The Story of my Heart.'

THE soul throbs like the sea for a larger life. No thought which I have ever had has satisfied my soul.—'The Story of my Heart.'

THE pettiness of house life—chairs and tables—and the pettiness of observances, the petty necessity of useless labour, useless

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because productive of nothing, chafe me the year through. I want to be always in company with the sun, and sea, and earth. These and the stars by night are my natural companions.—'The Story of my Heart.'

O BEAUTIFUL human life! Tears come in my eyes as I think of it. So beautiful, so inexpressibly beautiful! . . . How willingly I would strew the paths of all with flowers; how beautiful a delight to make the world joyous! The song should never be silent, the dance never still, the laugh should sound like water which runs for ever.—'The Story of my Heart.'

THE credit given by the unthinking to the statement that all affairs are directed has been the bane of the world since the

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days of the Egyptian papyre and the origin of superstition. So long as men firmly believe that everything is fixed for them, so long is progress impossible. If you argue yourself into the belief that you cannot walk to a place, you cannot walk there; but if you start, you can walk there easily.—'The Story of my Heart.'

I MYSELF maintain that the mind of man is practically infinite. It can understand anything brought before it. It has not the power of its own motion to bring everything before it, but when anything is brought it is understood. It is like sitting in a room with one window: you cannot compel everything to pass the window, but whatever does pass is seen. It is like a magnifying glass, which magnifies and explains everything brought into its focus.—'The Story of my Heart.'

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THOUGHTS FROM WRITINGS

SO wedded and so confirmed is the world in its narrow grove of self, so stolid and so complacent under the immense weight of misery, so callous to its own possibilities, and so grown to its chains, that I almost despair to see it awakened.—'The Story of my Heart.'

I VERILY believe that the earth in one year produces enough food to last for thirty. Why, then, have we not enough? Why do people die of starvation, or lead a miserable existence on the verge of it? Why have millions upon millions to toil from morning to evening just to gain a mere crust of bread? Because of the absolute lack of organisation by which such labour should produce its effect, the absolute lack of distribution, the absolute lack even of the very idea that such things are possible. Nay, even to mention such

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things, to say that they are possible, is criminal with many. Madness could hardly go farther.—'The Story of my Heart.'

AT this hour, out of thirty-four millions who inhabit this country, two-thirds—say twenty-two millions—live within thirty years of that abominable institution the poor-house. That any human being should dare to apply to another the epithet 'pauper' is, to me, the greatest, the vilest, the most unpardonable crime that could be committed. Each human being, by mere birth, has a birthright in this earth and all its productions; and if they do not receive it, then it is they who are injured, and it is not the 'pauper'—O inexpressibly wicked word! it is the well-to-do who are the criminal classes.

It matters not in the least if the poor

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be improvident, or drunken, or evil in any way. Food and drink, roof and clothes, are the inalienable right of every child born into the light. If the world does not provide it freely—not as a grudging gift but as a right, as a son of the house sits down to breakfast—then is the world mad. But the world is not mad, only in ignorance—an interested ignorance, kept up by strenuous exertions, from which infernal darkness it will, in course of time, emerge, marvelling at the past as a man wonders at and glories in the light who has escaped from blindness.—'The Story of my Heart.'

WE must endeavour to understand the crookedness and unfamiliar curves of the conditions of life. Beyond that still there are other ideas. Never, never rest contented with any circle of ideas, but always be certain that a wider one

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is still possible. For my thought is like a hyperbola that continually widens ascending.—'The Story of my Heart.'

A RIVER runs itself clear during the night, and in sleep thought becomes pellucid. All the hurrying to and fro, the unrest and stress, the agitation and confusion subside. Like a sweet pure spring, thought pours forth to meet the light, and is illumined to its depths. The dawn at my window ever causes a desire for larger thought, the recognition of the light at the moment of waking kindles afresh the wish for a broad day of the mind. There is a certainty that there are yet ideas further, and greater—that there is still a limitless beyond. I know at that moment that there is no limit to the things that may be yet in material and tangible shape besides the immaterial perceptions of the soul. The

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dim white light of the dawn speaks it. This prophet which has come with its wonders to the bedside of every human being for so many thousands of years faces me once again with the upheld finger of light. Where is the limit to that physical sign?—'The Story of my Heart.'

AT present the endeavour to make discoveries is like gazing at the sky up through the boughs of an oak.

Here a beautiful star shines clearly; here a constellation is hidden by a branch; a universe by a leaf. Some mental instrument or organon is required to enable us to distinguish between the leaf which may be removed and a real void: when to cease to look in one direction, and to work in another.—'The Story of my Heart.'

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COULD we employ the ocean as a lens, and force truth from the sky, even then I think there would be much more beyond.—'The Story of my Heart.'

BEFORE a bridge is built, or a structure erected, or an inter-oceanic canal made, there must be a plan, and before a plan the thought in the mind. So that it is correct to say the mind bores tunnels through the mountains, bridges the rivers, and constructs the engines which are the pride of the world.—'The Story of my Heart.'

SO great is the value of the soul that it seems to me, if the soul lived and received its aspirations it would not matter if the material universe melted away as snow. Many turn aside the instant the soul is mentioned, and I sympathise with them in one

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sense: they fear lest, if they acknowledge it, they will be fettered by mediæval conditions. My contention is that the restrictions of the mediæval ever should entirely be cast into oblivion, but the soul recognised and employed. Instead of slurring over the soul I desire to see it at its highest perfection.—'The Story of my Heart.'

THE restriction of thought to purely mechanical grooves blocks progress in the same way as the restrictions of mediæval superstition. Let the wind think, dream, imagine: let it have perfect freedom. To shut out the soul is to put us back more than twelve thousand years. Just as outside light, and the knowledge gained from light, there are, I think, other mediums from which, in times to come, intelligence will be obtained, so outside the mental and the spiritual

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ideas we now possess I believe there exists a whole circle of ideas. In the conception of the idea that there are others, I lay claim to another idea.—'The Story of my Heart.'

GIVE me life strong and full as the brimming ocean; give me thoughts wide as its plain; give me a soul beyond these. Sweet is the bitter sea by the shore where the faint blue pebbles are lapped by the green-grey wave, where the wind-quivering foam is loth to leave the lashed stone. Sweet is the bitter sea, and the clear green in which the gaze seeks the soul, looking through the glass into itself. The sea thinks for me as I listen and ponder: the sea thinks, and every boom of the wave repeats my prayer.—'The Story of my Heart.'

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THOUGHTS FROM WRITINGS

MY soul cannot reach to its full desire of prayer. I need no earth, or sea, or sun to think my thought. If my thought-part—the psyche—were entirely separated from the body, and from the earth, I should of myself desire the same. In itself my soul desires; my existence, my soul-existence is in itself my prayer, and so long as it exists so long will it pray that I may have the fullest soul-life.—'The Story of my Heart.'

THOUGH not often consciously recognised, perhaps this is the great pleasure of summer, to watch the earth, the dead particles, revolving themselves into the living case of life, to see the seed-leaf push aside the clod and become by degrees the perfumed flower. From the tiny mottled egg come the wings that by-and-by shall pass the immense sea. It

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is in this marvellous transformation of clods and cold matter into living things that the joy and the hope of summer reside. Every blade of grass, each leaf, each separate floret and petal, is an inscription speaking of hope. Consider the grasses and the oaks, the swallows, the sweet blue butterfly—they are one and all a sign and token showing before our eyes earth made into life. So that my hope becomes as broad as the horizon afar, reiterated by every leaf, sung on every bough, reflected in the gleam of every flower. There is so much for us yet to come, so much to be gathered, and enjoyed. Not for you or me, now, but for our race, who will ultimately use this magical secret for their happiness. Earth holds secrets enough to give them the life of the fabled Immortals. My heart is fixed firm and stable in the belief that ultimately the sunshine and the summer,

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the flowers and the azure sky, shall become, as it were, interwoven into man's existence. He shall take from all their beauty and enjoy their glory. Hence it is that a flower is to me so much more than stalk and petals. When I look in the glass I see that every line in my face means pessimism; but in spite of my face—that is my experience—I remain an optimist. Time with an unsteady hand has etched thin crooked lines, and, deepening the hollows, has cast the original expression into shadow. Pain and sorrow flow over us with little ceasing, as the sea-hoofs beat on the beach. Let us not look at ourselves but onwards, and take strength from the leaf and the signs of the field. He is indeed despicable who cannot look onwards to the ideal life of man. Not to do so is to deny our birthright of mind.—'The Life of the Fields':[1] The Pageant of Summer.

[1] 'The Life of the Fields': Chatto and Windus.

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THE fervour of the sunbeams descending in a tidal flood rings on the strung harp of earth. It is this exquisite undertone, heard and yet unheard, which brings the mind into sweet accordance with the wonderful instrument of nature.—'The Life of the Fields': The Pageant of Summer.

MANY times the bees have returned to their hives, and thus the index of the day advances. It is nothing to the greenfinches; all their thoughts are in their song-talk. The sunny moment is to them all in all. So deeply are they rapt in it that they do not know whether it is a moment or a year. There is no clock for feeling, for joy, for love. . . . Each moment, as with the greenfinches, is so full of life that it seems so long and so sufficient in itself. Not only the days,

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but life itself lengthens in summer. I would spread abroad my arms and gather more of it to me, could I do so. —'The Life of the Fields': The Pageant of Summer.

LET not the eyes grow dim, look not back but forward; the soul must uphold itself like the sun. Let us labour to make the heart grow larger as we become older, as the spreading oak gives more shelter. That we could but take to the soul some of the greatness and the beauty of the summer!—'The Life of the Fields': The Pageant of Summer.

I CANNOT leave it; I must stay under the old tree in the midst of the long grass, the luxury of the leaves, and the song in the very air. I seem as if I could feel all the glowing life the sunshine gives and the south

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wind calls to being. The endless grass, the endless leaves, the immense strength of the oak expanding, the unalloyed joy of finch and blackbird; from all of them I receive a little. Each gives me something of the pure joy they gather for themselves. In the blackbird's melody one note is mine; in the dance of the leaf shadows the formed maze is for me, though the motion is theirs; the flowers with a thousand faces have collected the kisses of the morning. Feeling with them, I receive some, at least, of their fulness of life. Never could I have enough; never stay long enough—whether here or whether lying on the shorter sward under the sweeping and graceful birches, or on the thyme-scented hills. Hour after hour and still not enough. Or walking, the footpath was never long enough, or my strength sufficient to endure till the mind was weary. The exceeding beauty of the

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earth, in her splendour of life, yields a new thought with every petal. The hours when the mind is absorbed by beauty are the only hours when we really live, so that the longer we can stay among these things so much the more is snatched from the inevitable Time. Let the shadow advance upon the dial —I can watch it with equanimity while it is there to be watched. It is only when the shadow is not there, when the clouds of winter cover it, that the dial is terrible. The invisible shadow goes on and steals from us. But now, while I can see the shadow of the tree and watch it slowly gliding along the surface of the grass, it is mine. These are the only hours that are not wasted—these hours that absorb the soul and fill it with beauty. This is real life, and all else is illusion, or mere endurance. Does this reverie of flowers and waterfall and song form an ideal, a human

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ideal, in the mind? It does; much the same ideal that Phidias sculptured of man and woman filled with a godlike sense of the violet fields of grace, beautiful beyond thought, calm as my turtle-dove before the lurid lightning of the unknown. To be beautiful and to be calm, without mental fear, is the ideal of Nature. If I cannot achieve it, at least I can think it.—'The Life of the Fields': The Pageant of Summer.

SO trustful are the doves, the squirrels, the birds of the branches, and the creatures of the field. Under their tuition let us rid ourselves of mental terrors, and face death itself as calmly as they do the livid lightning; so trustful and so content with their fate, resting in themselves and unappalled. If but by reason and will I could reach the godlike calm and courage of what we so thoughtlessly call the timid turtle-

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dove, I should lead a nearly perfect life. —'The Life of the Fields': The Pageant of Summer.

HUMAN thoughts and imaginings written down are pale and feeble in bright summer light. The eye wanders away, and rests more lovingly on greensward and green lime leaves. The mind wanders yet deeper and farther into the dreamy mystery of the azure sky. . . . The delicacy and beauty of thought or feeling is so extreme that it cannot be inked in; it is like the green and blue of field and sky, of veronica flower and grass blade, which in their own existence throw light and beauty on each other, but in artificial colours repel. . . . Never yet have I been able to write what I felt about the sunlight only. Colour and form and light are as magic to me. It is a trance. It requires a language of

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ideas to convey it. It is ten years since I last reclined on that grass plot, and yet I have been writing of it as if it was yesterday, and every blade of grass is as visible and real to me now as then.—'The Life of the Fields': Meadow Thoughts.

THERE is something beyond the philosophies in the light, in the grass-blades, the leaf, the grasshopper, the sparrow on the wall. Some day the great and beautiful thought which hovers on the confines of the mind will at last alight. In that is hope, the whole sky is full of abounding hope. Something beyond the books, that is consolation.—'The Life of the Fields': Meadow Thoughts.

NATURE flings treasures abroad, puffs them with open lips along on every breeze, piles up lavish layers of them in the free open

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air, packs countless numbers together in the needles of a fir-tree. Prodigality and superfluity are stamped on everything she does. The ear of wheat returns a hundredfold the grain from which it grew. The surface of the earth offers to us far more than we can consume—the grains, the seeds, the fruits, the animals, the abounding products are beyond the power of all the human race to devour. They can, too, be multiplied a thousandfold. There is no natural lack. Whenever there is lack among us it is from artificial causes, which intelligence should remove. From the littleness, and meanness, and niggardliness forced upon us by circumstances, what a relief to turn aside to the exceeding plenty of Nature! There are no bounds to it, there is no comparison to parallel it, so great is this generosity.—'The Life of the Fields': Meadow Thoughts.

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OF RICHARD JEFFERIES

ALONE in the green-roofed cave, alone with the sunlight and the pure water, there was a sense of something more than these. The water was more to me than water, and the sun than sun. The gleaming rays on the water in my palm held me for a moment, the touch of the water gave me something from itself. A moment, and the gleam was gone, the water flowing away, but I had had them. Beside the physical water and physical light I had received from them their beauty; they had communicated to me this silent mystery. The pure and beautiful water, the pure, clear, and beautiful light, each had given me something of their truth.—'The Life of the Fields': Meadow Thoughts.

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THOUGHTS FROM WRITINGS

IF the air at the sea beach is good, that of the hills above the sea is at least twice as good, and twice as strengthening. It possesses all the virtue of the sea air without the moisture which ultimately loosens the joints, and seems to penetrate to the very nerves. Those who desire air and quick recovery should go to the hills, where the wind has a scent of the sunbeams.—'The Life of the Fields': Clematis Lane.

THE lost leaves measure our years; they are gone as the days are gone, and the bare branches silently speak of a new year, slowly advancing to its buds, its foliage, and fruit. . . . With their annual loss of leaves, and renewal, oak and elm and ash and beech seem to stand by us and to share our thoughts.—'The Life of the Fields': January in the Sussex Woods.

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THE sweet grass was wet with dew as I walked through a meadow in Somerset to the river. The cuckoo sang, the pleasanter perhaps because his brief tune was nearly over, and all pleasant things seem to have a deeper note as they draw towards an end. Dew and sweet green grass were the more beautiful because of the knowledge that the high hills around were covered by sun-dried, wiry heather. Riverside mead, dew-laden grass, and sparkling stream were like an oasis in the dry desert. They refreshed the heart to look upon as water refreshes the weary.—'The Life of the Fields': The Water-Colley.

IT is the birds and other creatures peculiar to the water that render fly-fishing so pleasant; were they all destroyed, and nothing left but the mere fish, one might as well stand and

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fish in a stone cattle-trough. I hope all true lovers of sport will assist in preserving rather than in killing them.—'The Life of the Fields': The Water-Colley.

IN the bunches of grass and by the gateways the germander speedwell looks like tiny specks of blue stolen, like Prometheus' fire, from the summer sky.—'The Life of the Fields': Notes on Landscape Painting.

WITHOUT hedges England would not be England. Hedges, thick and high, and full of flowers, birds, and living creatures, of shade and flecks of sunshine dancing up and down the bark of the trees—I love their very thorns. You do not know how much there is in the hedges. We have still the woods, with here and there a forest, the beauty of the hills,

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and the charm of winding brooks. I never see roads, or horses, men, or anything when I get beside a brook. There is the grass, and the wheat, the clouds, the delicious sky, and the wind, and the sunlight which falls on the heart like a song. It is the same, the very same, only I think it is brighter and more lovely now than it was twenty years ago.—'The Life of the Fields': Notes on Landscape Painting.

A SLUMBEROUS silence of abundant light, of the full summer day, of the high flood of summer hours whose tide can rise no higher. A time to linger and dream under the beautiful breast of heaven, heaven brooding and descending in pure light upon man's handiwork. If the light shall thus come in, and of its mere loveliness overcome every aspect of dreariness, why shall not the light of

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thought and hope—the light of the soul —overcome and sweep away the dust of our lives?—'The Life of the Fields': Sunlight in a London Square.

AND endless succession of labour, under the brightness of summer, under the gloom of winter; to my thought it is a sadness even in the colour and light and glow of this hour of sun, this ceaseless labour, repeating the furrow, reiterating the blow, the same furrow, the same stroke—shall we never know how to lighten it, how to live with the flowers, the swallows, the sweet delicious shade, and the murmur of the stream? . . . I hope that at some time, by dint of bolder thought and freer action, the world shall see a race able to enjoy it without stint, a race able to enjoy the flowers with which the physical world is strewn, the colours of the garden of life. To look backwards

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with the swallow there is sadness to-day, with the fleck of cloud there is unrest, but forward with the broad sunlight, there is hope.—'The Life of the Fields': Sunlight in a London Square.

IT is a common effect of great things to be overlooked. A moderately large rock, a moderately large house, is understood and mentally put down, as it were, at a certain figure, but the immense—which is beyond the human—cannot enter the organs of the senses. The portals of the senses are not wide enough to receive it; you must turn your back on it and reflect, and add a little piece of it to another little piece, and so build up your understanding.—'The Life of the Fields': Venice in the East End.

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WE labour on and think, and carve our idols, and the pen never ceases from its labour; but the lapse of the centuries has left us in the same place. The doves who have not laboured nor travailed in thought possess the sunlight. Is not theirs the preferable portion?—'The Life of the Fields': The Pigeons at the British Museum.

IF any imagine they shall find thought in many books, certainly they will be disappointed. Thought dwells by the stream and sea, by the hill and in the woodland, in the sunlight and free wind, where the wild dove haunts.—'The Life of the Fields': The Pigeons at the British Museum.

THOSE original grains of true thought were found beside the stream, the sea, in the sunlight, at the shady verge of woods. Let

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us leave this beating and turning over of empty straw; let us return to the stream and the hills; let us ponder by night in view of the stars.—'The Life of the Fields': The Pigeons at the British Museum.

SINCE the days of ancient Greece the doves have remained in the sunshine; we who have laboured have found nothing. In the sunshine, by the shady verge of woods, by the sweet waters where the wild dove sips, there alone will thought be found.—'The Life of the Fields': The Pigeons at the British Museum.

DID ever any one have a beautiful idea or feeling without being repulsed?—'Amaryllis at the Fair.'[1]

[1] 'Amaryllis at the Fair': Sampson Low, Marston & Co.

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THOUGHTS FROM WRITINGS

WHAT a fallacy it is that hard work is the making of money; I could show you plenty of men who have worked the whole of their lives as hard as ever could possibly be, and who are still as far off independence as when they began. In fact, that is the rule; the winning of independence is rarely the result of work, else nine out of ten would be well-to-do.—'Amaryllis at the Fair.'

SUCH emanations as there may be from burning logs are odorous of the woodland, of the sunshine, of the fields and fresh air; the wood simply gives out as it burns the sweetness it has imbibed through its leaves from the atmosphere which floats above grass and flowers.—'Amaryllis at the Fair.'

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LES MISÉRABLES who have to write like myself must put up with anything, and be thankful for permission to exist; but people with mighty incomes from tea, or crockery-ware, or mud, or bricks and mortar,—why on earth these happy and favoured mortals do not live like the gods passes understanding.—'Amaryllis at the Fair.'

I AM not a Roman Catholic; but I must confess that if I could be assured any particular piece of wood had really formed a part of the Cross, I should think it the most valuable thing in the world, to which Koh-i-noors would be mud.

I am a pagan, and think the heart and soul above crowns.—'Amaryllis at the Fair.'

IT is possible to think till you cannot act.—'Amaryllis at the Fair.'

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THE photographer fixes the head of the sitter by a sort of stand at the back, which holds it steady in one position while the camera takes the picture. In life most people have their heads fixed in the claws of some miserable pettiness, which interests them so greatly that they tramp on steadily forward, staring ahead, and there's not the slightest fear of their seeing anything outside the rut they are travelling.—'Amaryllis at the Fair.'

IT is the modern fashion to laugh at the East, and despise the Turks and all their ways, making Grand Viziers of barbers, and setting waiters in high places, with the utmost contempt for anything reasonable,—all so incongruous and chance-ruled. In truth, all things in our very midst go on in the Turkish manner; crooked men are set in straight places, and straight people

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in crooked places, just the same as if we had all been dropped promiscuously out of a bag and shook down together on the earth to work out our lives, quite irrespective of our abilities and natures. Such an utter jumble.—'Amaryllis at the Fair.'

IN time, long time, people's original feelings get strangely confused and overlaid. The churchwardens of the eighteenth century plastered the fresco paintings of the fourteenth in their churches—covered them over with yellowish mortar. The mould grows up, and hides the capital of the fallen column; the acanthus is hidden in earth. At the foot of the oak, where it is oldest, the bark becomes dense and thick, impenetrable, and without sensitiveness; you may cut off an inch thick without reaching the sap. A sort of scale or caking in long, long time grows over original feelings.—'Amaryllis at the Fair.'

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THOUGHTS FROM WRITINGS

IT is not the particular cast of features that makes a man great, and gives him a pre-eminence among his fellows. It is the character —the mind.

A great genius commands attention at once by his presence, and so a woman may equally impress by the power of her nature. Her moral strength asserts itself in subtle ways.—'Amaryllis at the Fair.'

THERE is nothing so good to the human heart as well agreed conversation, when you know that your companion will answer to your thought as the anvil meets the hammer, ringing sound to merry stroke; better than wine, better than sleep, like love itself—for love is agreement of thought. —'Amaryllis at the Fair.'

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WHEN the east wind ceases, and the sun shines above, and the flowers beneath 'a summer's day in lusty May,' then is the time an Interlude in Heaven.—'Amaryllis at the Fair.'

THAT is the saddest of thoughts—as we grow older the romance fades, and all things become commonplace.

Half our lives are spent in wishing for to-morrow, the other half in wishing for yesterday.

Wild-flowers alone never become commonplace. The white wood-sorrel at the foot of the oak, the violet in the hedge of the vale, the thyme on the wind-swept downs, they were as fresh this year as last, as dear to-day as twenty years since, even dearer, for they grow now, as it were, in the earth we have made for them of our hopes, our

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prayers, our emotions, our thoughts.—'Amaryllis at the Fair.'

YOU cannot draw a bird in flight. Swallows are attempted oftenest, and done worst of all. How can you draw life itself? What is life? you cannot even define it. The swallow's wing has the motion of life—its tremble—its wonderful delicacy of vibration—the instant change—the slip of the air;—no man will ever be able to draw a flying swallow.—'Amaryllis at the Fair.'

IF once the mind has been dipped in Fleet Street, let the meads be never so sweet, the mountain-top never so exalted, still to Fleet Street the mind will return, because there is that other mind, without whose sympathy even success is nothing—the mind of the world.

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I am, of course, thinking not only of the thoroughfare, Fleet Street, but of all that the printing-press means.—'Amaryllis at the Fair.'

THE sun at his meridian pours forth his light, forgetting, in all the inspiration of his strength and glory, that without an altar-screen of green his love must scorch. Joy in life; joy in life. The ears listen, and want more; the eyes are gratified with gazing, and desire yet further; the nostrils are filled with the sweet odours of flower and sap. The touch, too, has its pleasures, dallying with leaf and flower. Can you not almost grasp the odour-laden air and hold it in the hollow of the hand?[1]—'Nature near London': Woodlands.

[1] 'Nature near London': Chatto and Windus.

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'ALWAYS get over a stile,' is the one rule that should ever be borne in mind by those who wish to see the land as it really is—that is to say, never omit to explore a footpath, for never was there a footpath yet which did not pass something of interest.—'Nature near London': Footpaths.

IN the pasture over the stile a wan cow feeds unmoved, calmly content, gathering the grass with rough tongue. It is not only what you actually see along the path, but what you remember to have seen, that gives it its beauty.—'Nature near London': Footpaths.

OUT again into the road as the sun sinks, and westwards the wind lifts a cloud of dust, which is lit up and made rosy by the

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rays passing through it. For such is the beauty of the sunlight that it can impart a glory even to dust.—'Nature near London': Footpaths.

THE wayside is open to all, and that which it affords may be enjoyed without fee; therefore it is that I return to it so often. It is a fact that common hedgerows often yield more of general interest than the innermost recesses of carefully guarded preserves, which by day are frequently still, silent, and denuded of everything, even of game; nor can flowers flourish in such thick shade, nor where fir-needles cover the ground.—'Nature near London': Nightingale Road.

THE brimming brook, as it wound towards me through the meads, seemed to tremble on the verge of overflowing, as the crown of wine in a

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glass rises yet does not spill. Level with the green grass, the water gleamed as though polished where it flowed smoothly, crossed with the dark shadows of willows which leaned over it. By the bridge, where the breeze rushed through the arches, a ripple flashed back the golden rays. The surface by the shore slipped towards a side hatch and passed over in a liquid curve, clear and unvarying, as if of solid crystal, till shattered on the stones, where the air caught up and played with the sound of the bubbles as they broke.—'Nature near London': A Brook.

OCTOBER'S winds are too searching for us to linger beside the brook, but still it is pleasant to pass by and remember the summer days. For the year is never gone by; in a moment we recall the sunshine we enjoyed in May, the roses

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we gathered in June, the first wheat-ear we plucked as the green corn filled. Other events go by and are forgotten, and even the details of our own lives, so immensely important to us at the moment, in time fade from the memory till the date we fancied we should never forget has to be sought in a diary.

But the year is always with us; the months are familiar always; they have never gone by.—'Nature near London': A London Trout.

HOW swiftly the much-desired summer comes upon us! Even with the reapers at work before one it is difficult to realise that it has not only come, but will soon be passing away. Sweet summer is but just long enough for the happy loves of the larks.—'Nature near London': Wheatfields.

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SO time advances till to-day, watching the reapers from the shadow of the copse, it seems as if within that golden expanse there must be something hidden, could you but rush in quickly and seize it—some treasure of the sunshine; and there is a treasure, the treasure of life stored in those little grains, the slow product of the sun.

But it cannot be grasped in an impatient moment—it must be gathered with labour.—'Nature near London': Wheatfields.

RAPT and absorbed in discount and dollars, in bills and merchandise, the overstrung mind deems itself all—the body is forgotten, the physical body, which is subject to growth and change, just as the plants and the very grass of the field. But there is a subtle connection between the physical man and the great nature which

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comes pressing up so closely to the metropolis. He still depends in the nineteenth century, as in the dim ages before the Pyramids, upon this tiny yellow grain here, rubbed out from the ear of wheat. The clever mechanism of the locomotive which bears him to and fro, week after week and month after month, from home to office and from office home, has not rendered him in the least degree independent of this.—'Nature near London': Wheatfields.

THERE is a slight but perceptible colour in the atmosphere of summer. It is not visible close at hand, nor always where the light falls strongest, and if looked at too long it sometimes fades away. But over gorse and heath, in the warm hollows of wheatfields, and round about the rising ground there is something more than air alone. It is not mist, nor

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the hazy vapour of autumn, nor the blue tints that come over distant hills and woods.

As there is a bloom upon the peach and grape, so this is the bloom of summer. The air is ripe and rich, full of the emanations, the perfume, from corn and flower and leafy tree. In strictness the term will not, of course, be accurate, yet by what other word can this appearance in the atmosphere be described but as a bloom?—'Nature near London': The River.

THE swallows perch and sing just over the muddy water. A sow lies in the mire. But the sweet swallows sing on softly: they do not see the wallowing animal, the mud, the brown water; they see only the sunshine, the golden buttercups, and the blue sky of summer. This is the true way to look at this beautiful earth.

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—'Nature near London': Round a London Copse.

THE first appearance of a star is very beautiful; the actual moment of first contact, as it were, of the ray with the eye is always a surprise, however often you may have enjoyed it, and notwithstanding that you are aware it will happen. Where there was only the indefinite violet before, the most intense gaze into which could discover nothing, suddenly, as if at that moment born, the point of light arrives. So glorious is the night that not all London, with its glare and smoke, can smother the sky; in the midst of the gas, and the roar, and the driving crowd, look up from the pavement, and there, straight above, are the calm stars.—'Nature near London': Magpie Fields.

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THE blue sky (not, of course, the blue of day), the white moonlight, the bright stars—larger at midnight and brilliant, in despite of the moon, which cannot overpower them in winter as she does in summer evenings—all are as beautiful as on the distant hills of old. By night, at least, even here, in the still silence, Heaven has her own way.—'Nature near London': Magpie Fields.

WHAT can the world produce equal to the June rose? The common briar, the commonest of all, offers a flower which, whether in itself, or the moment of its appearance at the junction of all sweet summer things, or its history and associations, is not to be approached by anything a millionaire could purchase. —'Nature near London': Trees about Town.

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HOW melancholy the inexpressible noise when the fair is left behind, and the wet vapours are settling and thickening around it! But the melancholy is not in the fair—the ploughboy likes it; it is in ourselves, in the thought that thus, though the years go by, so much of human life remains the same—the same blatant discord, the same monotonous roundabout, the same poor gingerbread. —'Nature near London': The Southdown Shepherd.

THE little rules and little experiences, all the petty ways of narrow life, are shut off behind by the ponderous and impassable cliff; as if we had dwelt in the dim light of a cave, but coming out at last to look at the sun, a great stone had fallen and closed the entrance, so that there was no return to the shadow.

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The impassable precipice shuts off our former selves of yesterday, forcing us to look out over the sea only, or up to the deeper Heaven.

These breadths draw out the soul; we feel that we have wider thoughts than we knew; the soul has been living, as it were, in a nutshell, all unaware of its own power, and now suddenly finds freedom in the sun and the sky.—'Nature near London': The Breeze on Beachy Head.

THERE is the sea below to bathe in, the air of the sky up hither to breathe, the sun to infuse the invisible magnetism of his beams. These are the three potent medicines of nature, and they are medicines that by degrees strengthen not only the body but the unquiet mind.—'Nature near London': The Breeze on Beachy Head.

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THE sun sinks behind the summit of the Downs, and slender streaks of purple are drawn along above them. A shadow comes forth from the cliff; a duskiness dwells on the water; something tempts the eye upwards, and near the zenith there is a star.—'Nature near London': The Breeze on Beachy Head.

THE bird upon the tree utters the meaning of the wind—a voice of the grass and wild-flower, words of the green leaf; they speak through that slender tone. Sweetness of dew and rifts of sunshine, the dark hawthorn touched with breadths of open bud, the odour of the air, the colour of the daffodil—all that is delicious and beloved of springtime are expressed in his song. Genius is nature and his lay, like the sap in the bough from which he sings, rises without

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thought. — 'Field and Hedgerow':[1] Hours of Spring.

IN time past, strong of foot, I walked gaily up the noble hill that leads to Beachy Head from Eastbourne, joying greatly in the sun and the wind. Every step crumbled up numbers of minute grey shells, empty and dry, that crunched under foot like hoar-frost or fragile beads. They were very pretty; it was a shame to crush them—such vases as no king's pottery could make. They lay by millions in the depths of the sward, and I thought as I broke them unwillingly that each of these had once been a house of life. A living creature dwelt in each and felt the joy of existence, and was to itself all in all —as if the great sun over the hill shone for it, and the width of the earth under was for it, and the grass and plants put

[1] 'Field and Hedgerow': Longmans, Green & Co.

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on purpose for it. They were dead, the whole race of them, and these their skeletons were as dust under my feet. Nature sets no value upon life neither of minute hill-snail nor of human being.—'Field and Hedgerow': Hours of Spring.

NATURE sets no value upon life, neither of mine nor of the larks that sang years ago. The earth is all in all to me, but I am nothing to the earth: it is bitter to know this before you are dead. These delicious violets are sweet for themselves; they were not shaped and coloured and gifted with the exquisite proportion and adjustment of odour and hue for me.—'Field and Hedgerow': Hours of Spring.

THERE was everything to repel—the cold, the frost, the hardness, the snow, dark sky and ground, leaflessness; the very furze

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chilled and all benumbed. Yet the forest was still beautiful. There was no day that we did not, all of us, glance out at it and admire it, and say something about it. Harder and harder grew the frost, yet still the forest-clad hills possessed a something that drew the mind open to their largeness and grandeur. Earth is always beautiful—always. Without colour, or leaf or sunshine, or song of bird and flutter of butterfly's wing; without anything sensuous, without advantage or gilding of summer—the power is ever there. Or shall we not say that the desire of the mind is ever there, and will satisfy itself, in a measure at least, even with the barren wild? The heart from the moment of its first beat instinctively longs for the beautiful; the means we possess to gratify it are limited—we are always trying to find the statue in the rude block. Out of the vast block of

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the earth the mind endeavours to carve itself loveliness, nobility, and grandeur. We strive for the right and the true; it is circumstance that thrusts wrong upon us.—'Field and Hedgerow': Hours of Spring.

I WONDER whether it is a joy to have bright scarlet spots, and to be clad in the purple and gold of life; is the colour felt by the creature that wears it? The rose, restful of a dewy morn before the sunbeams have topped the garden wall, must feel a joy in its own fragrance, and know the exquisite hue of its stained petals. The rose sleeps in its beauty.

The fly whirls his scarlet-spotted wings about and splashes himself with sunlight, like the children on the sands. He thinks not of the grass and sun; he does not heed them at all—and that is why he is so happy—any more than the

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barefoot children ask why the sea is there, or why it does not quite dry up when it ebbs. He is unconscious; he lives without thinking about living; and if the sunshine were a hundred hours long, still it would not be long enough. No, never enough of sun and sliding shadows that come like a hand over the table to lovingly reach our shoulder, never enough of the grass that smells sweet as a flower, not if we could live years and years equal in number to the tides that have ebbed and flowed, counting backwards four years to every day and night, backward still till we found out which came first, the night or the day.

The scarlet-dotted fly knows nothing of the names of the grasses that grow here where the sward nears the sea, and thinking of him I have decided not to wilfully seek to learn any more of their names either. My big grass book I

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have left at home, and the dust is settling on the gold of the binding. I have picked a handful this morning of which I know nothing. I will sit here on the turf and the scarlet-dotted flies shall pass over me, as if I too were but a grass. I will not think, I will be unconscious, I will live.—'Field and Hedgerow': The July Grass.

LISTEN! That was the low sound of a summer wavelet striking the uncovered rock over there beneath in the green sea. All things that are beautiful are found by chance, like everything that is good. Here by me is a praying-rug, just wide enough to kneel on, of the richest gold inwoven with crimson. All the Sultans of the East never had such beauty as that to kneel on. It is, indeed, too beautiful to kneel on, for the life in these golden flowers must not be broken down even

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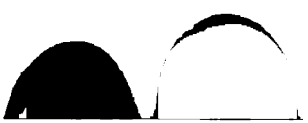
for that purpose. They must not be defaced, not a stem bent; it is more reverent not to kneel on them, for this carpet prays itself. I will sit by it and let it pray for me. It is so common, the bird's-foot lotus, it grows everywhere; yet if I purposely searched for days I should not have found a plot like this, so rich, so golden, so glowing with sunshine. You might pass by it in one stride, yet it is worthy to be thought of for a week and remembered for a year.—'Field and Hedgerow': The July Grass.

I KNOW nothing to which the wind has not some happy use. Is there a grain of dust so small the wind shall not find it out? ground in the mill-wheel of the centuries, the iron of the distant mountain floats like gossamer, and is drunk up as dew by leaf and living lung.—'Field and Hedgerow': Winds of Heaven.



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ALL things reposed but man, and man is so busy with his vulgar aims that it quite dawns upon many people as a wonderful surprise how still nature is on a Sunday morning. Nature is absolutely still every day of the week, and proceeds with the most absolute indifference to days and dates.—'Field and Hedgerow': The Country Sunday.

THE beautiful swallows, be tender to them, for they symbol all that is best in nature and all that is best in our hearts.—'Field and Hedgerow': Swallow-Time.

THE light is never the same on a landscape many minutes together, as all know who have tried, ever so crudely, to fix the fleeting expression of the earth with pencil. It is ever changing, and in the same way

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as you walk by the hedges day by day there is always some fresh circumstance of nature, the interest of which in a measure blots out the past.—'Field and Hedgerow': Among the Nuts.

COULD imperial Rome have only grown sufficient wheat in Italy to have fed her legions, Cæsar would still be master of three-fourths of the earth. Rome thought more in her latter days of grapes and oysters and mullets, that change colour as they die, and singing girls and flute-playing, and cynic verse of Horace—anything rather than corn. Rome is no more, and the lords of the world are they who have mastership of wheat.—'Field and Hedgerow': Walks in the Wheatfields.

DESPOTS grind half the human race, and despots stronger than man—plague, pestilence, and famine—grind the whole; and yet

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the world increases, and the green wheat of the human heart is not to be trampled out.—'Field and Hedgerow': Walks in the Wheatfields.

THE gallows at the cross-roads is gone, but the workhouse stands, and custom, that tyrant of the mind, has inured us (to use an old word) to its existence in our midst. Apart from any physical suffering, let us only consider the slow agony of the poor old reaper when he feels his lusty arm wither, and of the grey bowed wife as they feel themselves drifting like a ship ashore to that stony waiting-room. For it is a waiting-room till the grave receives them. Economically, too, the workhouse is a heavy loss and drag. Could we, then, see the tithe barn filled again with golden wheat for this purpose of help to humanity, it might be a great and wonderful good. With this truth

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to feed the starving and clothe the naked; with the tenth to give the little children a midday meal at the school—that would be natural and true. In the course of time, as the land laws lessen their grip, and the people take possession of the earth on which they stand, it is more than probable that something of this kind will really come about. It would be only simple justice after so many centuries—it takes so many hundreds of years to get even that.—'Field and Hedgerow': Walks in the Wheatfields.

HE who has got the sense of beauty in his eye can find it in things as they really are, and needs no stagey time of artificial pastorals to furnish him with a sham nature. Idealise to the full, but idealise the real, else the picture is a sham.—'Field and Hedgerow': Walks in the Wheatfields.

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A BARNYARD chanticleer and his family afford more matter than the best book ever written. His coral red comb, his silvery scaled legs, his reddened feathers, and his fiery attitudes, his jolly crow, and all his ways—there's an illustrated pamphlet, there's a picture-book for you in one creature only! Reckon his family, the tender little chicks, the enamelled eggs, the feeding every day, the roosting, the ever-present terror of the red wood-dog (as the gypsies call the fox), here's a Chronicon Nurembergense with a thousand woodcuts; a whole history.—'Field and Hedgerow': Walks in the Wheatfields.

THE sweet violets bloom afresh every spring on the mounds, the cowslips come, and the happy note of the cuckoo, the wild rose of midsummer, and the golden wheat of

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August. It is the same beautiful old country always new. Neither the iron engine nor the wooden plough alter it one iota, and the love of it rises as constantly in our hearts as the coming of the leaves. — 'Field and Hedgerow': Walks in the Wheatfields.

SUCH is the wonderful power of plants. To any one who takes a delight in wild-flowers, some or other of the earth is always becoming consecrated.—'Field and Hedgerow': Locality and Nature.

THE experience of the rudest country rustic is not to be despised; an observation is an observation, whoever makes it; there has been an air of too much science in the affected decision of our forefathers' wisdom.—'Field and Hedgerow': Locality and Nature.

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ENGLISH folk don't 'cotton' to their poverty at all; they don't eat humble-pie with a relish; they resent being poor and despised. Foreign folk seem to take to it quite naturally; an Englishman, somehow or other, always feels that he is wronged. He is injured; he has not got his rights. To me it seems the most curious thing possible that well-to-do people should expect the poor to be delighted with their condition. I hope they never will be; an evil day that—if it ever came—for the Anglo-Saxon race.—'Field and Hedgerow': Cottage Ideas.

THE well-to-do are educated, they have travelled, if not in their ideas, they are more or less cosmopolitan. In the cottager you get to 'bed-rock' as the Americans say; there's the foundation. Character runs upwards not downwards. It is not the

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nature of the aristocrat that permeates the cottager, but the nature of the cottager that permeates the aristocrat. The best of us are polished cottagers. Scratch deep enough, and you come to that; so that to know a people, go to the cottage, and not to the mansion.—'Field and Hedgerow': Cottage Ideas.

NATURE would go on though under the thumb of the north wind. Poor folk came out of the towns to gather ivy-leaves for sale in the streets to make button-holes. Many people think the ivy-leaf has a pleasant shape; it was used of old time among the Greeks and Romans to decorate the person at joyous festivals. The ivy is frequently mentioned in the classic poets. Not so with the country woman in the villages to-day, ground down in constant dread of that hateful workhouse system of which I can find

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no words to express my detestation. They tell their daughters never to put ivy-leaves in their hair or brooch, because 'they puts it on the dead paupers in the unions, and the lunatics in the 'sylums.' Such an association took away all the beauty of the ivy-leaf. There is nature in their hearts, you see, although they are under the polar draught of poverty.—'Field and Hedgerow': The Time of Year.

THERE are never two works of equal beauty of any kind, just as there are never two moments of equal pleasure: seize the one you have, and make much of it, for such a moment will never return.—'Field and Hedgerow': Nature in the Louvre.

THE sun rolls on in the far dome of heaven, and now day, and now night sweeps with alternate bands over the surface of hill, and

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wood, and sea; the sea beats in endless waves, which first began to undulate a thousand, thousand years ago, starting from the other rim of Time; the green leaves repeat the beauty that gladdened man in ancient days. But for themselves they are, and not for us. Their glory fills the mind with rapture, but for a while, and it learns that they are, like carven idols, wholly careless and indifferent to our fate. Then is the valley incomplete, and the void sad! Its hills speak of death as well as of life, and we know that for man there is nothing on earth really but man; the human species owns and possesses nothing but its species. When I saw this I turned with threefold concentration of desire and love towards that expression of hope which is called beauty, such as is worked in marble here. For I think beauty is truthfully an expression of hope, and that is why it is so enthralling—because

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while the heart is absorbed in its contemplation, unconscious but powerful, hope is filling the breast. So powerful is it as to banish for the time all care, and to make this life seem the life of the immortals.—'Field and Hedgerow': Nature in the Louvre.

OUR English landscape wants no gardening: it cannot be gardened. The least interference kills it. The beauty of English woodland and country is in its detail. There is nothing empty and unclothed. If the clods are left a little while undisturbed in the fields, weeds spring up and wild-flowers bloom upon them. To the hedge cut and trimmed, lo! the blue-bells flower the more, and a yet fresher green buds forth upon the twigs. Never was there a garden like the meadow; there is not an inch of the meadow in early summer without a

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flower. Old walls, as we saw just now, are not left without a fringe, on the top of the hardest brick wall, on the sapless tiles, on slates, stonecrop takes hold and becomes a cushion of yellow bloom. Nature is a miniature painter and handles a delicate brush, the tip of which touches the tiniest spot and leaves something living. The park has indeed its larger lines, its broad open sweep, and gradual slope, to which the eye, accustomed to small enclosures, requires time to adjust itself. These left to themselves are beautiful; they are the surface of the earth, which is always true to itself and needs no banks nor artificial hollows. The earth is right and the tree is right; trim either and all is wrong: the deer will not fit to them then.—'Field and Hedgerow': An English Deer-Park.

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NO one else seems to have seen the sparkle on the brook, or heard the music at the hatch, or to have felt back through the centuries; and when I try to describe these things to them, they look at me with stolid incredulity. No one seems to understand how I got food from the clouds, nor what there was in the night, nor why it is not so good to look at it out of window. They turn their faces away from me, so that perhaps after all I was mistaken, and there never was any such place nor any such meadows, and I was never there. And perhaps in course of time I shall find out also, when I pass away physically, that as a matter of fact there never was any earth.—'Field and Hedgerow': My Old Village.

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IF a man's work that he has done all the days of his life could be collected and piled up around him in visible shape, what a vast mound there would be beside some! If each act or stroke was represented, say by a brick, John Brown would have stood the day before his ending by the side of a monument as high as a pyramid. Then if in front of him could be placed the sum and product of his labour, the profit to himself, he could have held it in his clenched hand like a nut, and no one would have seen it. Our modern people think they train their sons to strength by football, and rowing, and jumping, and what are called athletic exercises; all of which it is the fashion now to preach as very noble, and likely to lead to the goodness of the race. Certainly feats are accomplished and records are beaten, but there is no real strength gained, no hardihood built up.

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Without hardihood it is of little avail to be able to jump an inch farther than somebody else. Hardihood is the true test, hardihood is the ideal, and not these caperings or ten minutes' spurts. Now, the way they made the boy John Brown hardy was to let him roll about on the ground with naked legs and bare head from morn till night, from June till December, from January till June. The rain fell on his head, and he played in wet grass to his knees. Dry bread and a little lard was his chief food. He went to work while he was still a child. At half-past three in the morning he was on his way to the farm stables, there to help feed the cart-horses, which used to be done with great care very early in the morning. The carter's whip used to sting his legs, and sometimes he felt the butt. At fifteen he was no taller than the sons of well-to-do people at eleven; he scarcely seemed to grow

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at all till he was eighteen or twenty, and even then very slowly, but at last became a tall big man. That slouching walk, with knees always bent, diminished his height to appearance; he really was the full size, and every inch of his frame had been slowly welded together by this ceaseless work, continual life in the open air, and coarse hard food. This is what makes a man hardy. This is what makes a man able to stand almost anything, and gives a power of endurance that can never be obtained by any amount of gymnastic training.—'Field and Hedgerow': My Old Village.

THE blackbird's whistle is very human, like a human being playing the flute; an uncertain player, now drawing forth a bar of a beautiful melody—then losing it again. He does not know what quiver or what turn his note will take before it ends;

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the note leads him and completes itself. It is a song which strives to express the singer's keen delight, the singer's exquisite appreciation of the loveliness of the days; the golden glory of the meadow, the light, the luxurious shadows, the indolent clouds reclining on their azure couch. Such thoughts can only be expressed in fragments, like a sculptor's chips, thrown off as the inspiration seizes him, not mechanically sawn to a set line. Now and again the blackbird feels the beauty of the time, the large white daisy stars, the grass with yellow-dusted tips, the air which comes so softly unperceived by any precedent rustle of the hedge, the water which runs slower, held awhile by rootlet, flag, and forget-me-not. He feels the beauty of the time, and he must say it. His notes come like wild-flowers, not sown in order. The sunshine opens and shuts the stops of his instrument.—'The

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Toilers of the Field':[1] The Coming of Summer.

PASS when you may, this little orchard has always something, because it is left to itself—I had written neglected, I struck the word out, for this is not neglect, this is true attention, to leave it to itself, so that the young trees trail over the bushes and stay till the berries fall of their own over-ripeness, if perchance spared by the birds; so that the dead brown leaves lie and are not swept away unless the wind pleases; so that all things follow their own course and bent.—'The Toilers of the Field': The Coming of Summer.

A JUNE rose. Something caught my eye on the top of the high hawthorn hedge beside the Brighton road one evening as it was

[1] 'The Toilers of the Field': Longmans, Green & Co.

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growing dusk, and on looking again there was a spray of briar in flower, two roses in full bloom and out of reach, and one spray of growing buds. So it is ever with the June rose. It is found unexpectedly, and when you are not looking for it. It is a gift, not a discovery, or anything earned—a gift like love and happiness. With ripening grasses the rose comes, and the rose is summer: till then it is spring.—'The Toilers of the Field': The Coming of Summer.

THE lions in Trafalgar Square are to me the centre of London. By those lions began my London work; from them, as spokes from the middle of a wheel, radiate my London thoughts. Standing by them and looking south you have in front the Houses of Parliament, where resides the mastership of England; at your

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back is the National Gallery—that is art; and farther back the British Museum—books. To the right lies the wealth and luxury of the West End; to the left the roar and labour, the craft and gold, of the City. For themselves, they are the only monument in this vast capital worthy of a second visit as a monument. Over the entire area covered by the metropolis there does not exist another work of art in the open air. There are many structures and things, no other art. The outlines of the great animals, the bold curves and firm touches of the master hand, the deep indents, as it were, of his thumb on the plastic metal, all the technique and grasp written there, is legible at a glance. Then comes the pose and expression of the whole, the calm strength in repose, the indifference to little things, the resolute view of great ones. Lastly, the soul of the

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maker, the spirit which was taken from nature, abides in the massive bronze. These lions are finer than those that crouch in the cages at the Zoological Gardens; these are truer and more real, and, besides, these are lions to whom has been added the heart of a man. Nothing disfigures them; smoke and, what is much worse, black rain—rain which washes the atmosphere of the suspended mud—does not affect them in the least. If the choke-damp of fog obscures them, it leaves no stain on the design; if the surfaces be stained, the idea made tangible in metal is not. They are no more touched than Time itself by the alternations of the seasons. The only noble open-air work of native art in the four-million city, they rest there supreme and are the centre. Did such a work exist now in Venice, what immense folios would be issued about it! All the language of the studios

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would be huddled together in piled-up and running-over laudation, and curses on our insular swine-eyes that could not see it. I have not been to Venice, therefore I do not pretend to a knowledge of that mediæval potsherd; this I do know, that in all the endless pictures on the walls of the galleries in London, year after year exposed and disappearing like snow somewhere unseen, never has there appeared one with such a subject as this. Weak, feeble, mosaic, gimcrack, coloured tiles, and far-fetched compound monsters, artificial as the graining on a deal front door, they cannot be compared; it is the ginger-bread gilt on a circus car to the column of a Greek temple. This is pure open air, grand as Nature herself, because it is Nature with, as I say, the heart of a man added.

But if any one desire the meretricious painting of warm light and cool yet

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not hard shade, the effect of colour, with the twitching of triangles, the spangles glittering, and all the arrangement contrived to take the eye, then he can have it here as well as noble sculpture. Ascend the steps to the National Gallery, and stand looking over the balustrade down across the square in summer hours. Let the sun have sloped enough to throw a slant of shadow outward; let the fountains splash whose bubbles restless speak of rest and leisure, idle and dreamy; let the blue-tinted pigeons nod their heads walking, and anon crowd through the air to the roof-tops. Shadow upon the one side, bright light upon the other, azure above and swallows. Ever rolling the human stream flows, mostly on the south side yonder, near enough to be audible, but toned to bearableness. A stream of human hearts, every atom a living mind filled with what thoughts?

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—a stream that ran through Rome once, but has altered its course and wears away the banks here now and triturates its own atoms, the hearts, to dust in the process. Yellow omnibuses and red cabs, dark shining carriages, chestnut horses, all rushing, and by their motion mixing their colours so that the commonness of it disappears and the hues remain, a streak drawn in the groove of the street—dashed hastily with thick camel's hair. In the midst the calm lions, dusky, unmoved, full always of the one grand idea that was infused into them. So full of it that the golden sun and the bright wall of the eastern houses, the shade that is slipping towards them, the sweet swallows and the azure sky, all the human stream holds of wealth and power and coroneted panels—nature, man, and city—pass as naught. Mind is stronger than matter. The soul alone

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stands when the sun sinks, when the shade is universal night, when the van's wheels are silent and the dust rises no more.

At summer noontide, when the day surrounds us and it is bright light even in the shadow, I like to stand by one of the lions and yield to the old feeling. The sunshine glows on the dusky creature, as it seems, not on the surface, but under the skin, as if it came up from out of the limb. The roar of the rolling wheels sinks and becomes distant as the sound of a waterfall when dreams are coming. All the abundant human life is smoothed and levelled, the abruptness of the individuals lost in the flowing current, like separate flowers drawn along in a border, like music heard so far off that the notes are molten and the theme only remains. The abyss of the sky over and the ancient sun are near. They only are close at hand, they and

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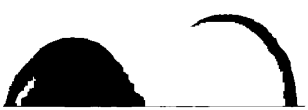
immortal thought. When the yellow Syrian lions stood in old time of Egypt, then, too, the sunlight gleamed on the eyes of men, as now this hour on mine. The same consciousness of light, the same sun, but the eyes that saw it and mine, how far apart! The immense lion here beside me expresses larger nature —cosmos — the ever-existent thought which sustains the world. Massiveness exalts the mind till the vast roads of space which the sun tramples are as an arm's-length. Such a moment cannot endure long; gradually the roar deepens, the current resolves into individuals, the houses return—it is only a square. But a square potent. For London is the only real place in the world. The cities turn towards London as young partridges run to their mother. The cities know that they are not real. They are only houses and wharves, and bricks and stucco; only outside. The



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minds of all men in them, merchants, artists, thinkers, are bent on London. Thither they go as soon as they can. San Francisco thinks London; so does St. Petersburg.

Men amuse themselves in Paris; they work in London. Gold is made abroad, but London has a hook and line on every napoleon and dollar, pulling the round discs hither. A house is not a dwelling if a man's heart be elsewhere. Now, the heart of the world is in London, and the cities with the simulacrum of man in them are empty. They are moving images only; stand here, and you are real.

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MY CHAFFINCH

HIS hours he spends upon a fragrant fir;
His merry 'chink,' his happy 'Kiss me, dear,'
Each moment sounded, keeps the copse astir.
Loudly he challenges his rivals near,
Anon aslant down to the ground he springs,
Like to a sunbeam made of coloured wings.

The firm and solid azure of the ceil
That struck by hand would give a hollow sound,
A dome turned perfect by the sun's great wheel,

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Whose edges rest upon the hills
around,
Rings many a mile with blue enamelled
wall;
His fir-tree is the centre of it all.

A lichened cup he set against the side
High up this mast, earth-stepped,
that could not fail,
But swung a little as a ship might ride,
Keeping an easy balance in the gale;
Slow-heaving like a gladiator's breast,
Whose strength in combat feels an idle
rest.

Whether the cuckoo or the chaffinch
most
Do triumph in the issuing of their
song?
I say not this, but many a swelling boast
They throw each at the other all day
long.
Soon as the nest had cradled eggs a-twin
The jolly squirrel climbed to look therein.

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Adown the lane athwart this pleasant wood
The broad-winged butterflies their solace sought;
A green-necked pheasant in the sunlight stood,
Nor could the rushes hide him as he thought.
A humble-bee through fern and thistle made
A search for lowly flowers in the shade.

A thing of many wanderings, and loss,
Like to Ulysses on his poplar raft,
His treasure hid beneath the tunnelled moss
Lest that a thief his labour steal with craft,
Up the round hill, sheep-dotted, was his way,
Zigzagging where some new adventure lay.

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OF RICHARD JEFFERIES

'My life and soul,' as if he were a Greek,
His heart was Grecian in his green-wood fane;
'My life and soul,' through all the sunny week
The chaffinch sang with beating heart amain.
'The humble-bee the wide wood-world may roam;
One feather's breadth I shall not stir from home.'

No note he took of what the swallows said
About the firing of some evil gun,
Nor if the butterflies were blue or red,
For all his feelings were intent in one.
The loving soul, a-thrill in all his nerves,
A life immortal as a man's deserves.

Edinburgh: T. and A. CONSTABLE
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